Ferment Lab is a participatory space for food and social fermentation and has been an ongoing project of Pixelache, Helsinki-based transdisciplinary platform for emerging art, design, research and activism, since 2014 (www.pixelache.ac/projects/ferment-lab).

Ferment Lab involves research and experimentation into food fermentation as well as into social interpretations of this concept. Overall Ferment Lab aims to be conducted in various locations in order to collect parallel stories of food and social transformation, transplant gained recipes into other contexts and create new knowledge and meanings through experiments in social fermentation.

WHY STRASBOURG?

Strasbourg and Alsace region has a deep and historically-long relationship to fermentation practices, traditions and innovations. It is widely-known for particular fermented specialties in the form of local varieties of wines, beers, cheeses, choucroute (sour-cabbage).

It has also hosted significant scientists, who have led to important discoveries and developments that benefitted the economy of the region. Most famous is the biochemist Louis Pasteur, who lived and worked in Strasbourg in the mid-1800s, whose research on fermentation led to the industrialisation of rural and agricultural practices through what was named after him as the pasteurization process. The effect of his work and the work of his contemporaries led to successful breweries and companies in Alsace during the Imperial German and French Republican periods of late 19th and early 20th Centuries.

On contrary fermentation performed in the context of Strasbourg, invites us to reflect on sanitisation and homogenisation of food production induced by European regulations. Those regulations have made it hard for various traditional food practices, producers and products to survive, and the food industry is more powerful than ever.
Through our research on local practices related to fermentation, Ferment Lab aims to reinterpret this heritage and rejuvenate disappearing traditions through the use of grass-roots approaches encouraging civic action through hacking, digital fabrication, citizen science, DIY (do-it-yourself) and DIWO (do-it-with-others) methodologies.

Those interests are aligned with Shadok's desire to be in a constant dialogue with various actors of the region and its ambition to be a space for experimentation, where things can emerge, develop and be shared. Le Shadok facilities and its upcoming in 2017 exhibition 'Laboratory of the Future' create a perfect context for Ferment Lab processual developments.

We are interested to work with neighbourhood and special-interest food associations, as well as cultural associations focused on sharing cultural heritage, collaborative making and urban gardening.

WHAT ARE WE ACTUALLY GOING TO DO?

The first step will be to contact cultural and social change organisations working with groups and invididuals from various cultural backgrounds in Strasbourg. We hope that these organisations help us identify people who know recipes for fermented food and beverages of various origins, and would like to share them and the context they are originated from with us, and the broader public of the city. Participants' knowledge and practices will be shared in the context of workshop events and as part of the creation of an open source cook book around fermentation.

Once the group of our fermenting specialists is formed, we plan to organize a 'meta-workshop', during which we will discuss a fermentation workshop series that would unfold from March to September 2017 and co-create a unified toolkit for performing and documenting the workshops events. Thanks to the toolkit, workshop hosts will be able to organise their events autonomously during the time when we are away. We will encourage and support them to perform fermentation workshops at Shadok following their own personal recipes.

The process of socialised fermentation will go hand in hand with the development of other activities. One is the "DIY detector for bacterial cultures" which is aimed to enable the detection of harmful bacteria in fermented samples. Moreover, the bacterial starters grown during the workshops will be strored and disseminated on handmade paper made via the "Bacterial Love Letters".

The final exhibition will present fermentation recipes, and the contexts they are coming from, combined with documentations of the workshops during which those recipes were performed. The fermentation culture starters will also be available for exibition visitors in the form of handmade bacterial paper which can be taken away and serve as a starter for own experimentations. In addition, the recipe-book and toolkit according to which the workshops were conducted, and the documenation of DIY spectroscope for bacteria detection (together with its prototype), will be open sourced and made available to the public.

SHADOK FABRIQUE DU NUMÉRIQU PI::ELACHE